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(23) Applicant: WALPOLE FRUIT PACKERS LIMITED
Broadend Road Wisbech
Wisbech Cambridgeshire(GB)

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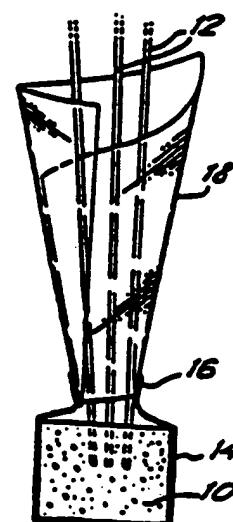
(27) Inventor: Wilkes-Chase, Kenneth 'Belt-Shalom'
Sandringham Avenue Wisbech
Cambridgeshire(GB)

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(26) Representative: Thomson, Roger Bruce et al.
POLLAK MERCER & TENCH High Holborn House 62-64
High Holborn
London WC1V 6RY(GB)

(54) Flower packs and methods of packaging flowers.

(57) A flower pack comprises a water-retaining medium (10) into which the stems (12) are inserted, and a wrapping (14,18) which both encloses the water-retaining medium and also encircles and protects the greater part of the stems. The wrapping preferably comprises a first sheet-form piece (14) of soft, waterproof plastics material which defines a bag for the medium (10) and has a collar (16), and a second sheet-form piece (18) of relatively stiff, crisp plastics material. The two sheets (14,18) may be heat sealed at the collar (16).



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FLOWER PACKS AND METHODS OF PACKAGING FLOWERS

SPECIFICATION

5 This invention relates to the packaging of flowers, and is particularly concerned with improved methods of packaging cut flowers which are for display and sale.

10 The conventional practice in the marketing of cut flowers for sale in shops, supermarkets, markets and other retail outlets is just to wrap a number of flowers in a cone of paper or plastics material with the stems protruding from the lower end of the cone and simply to stand these wrapped flowers in a bucket of water. When a customer wishes to buy one of the items, the wrapped flowers are simply removed from the bucket or other container, and may perhaps be over-wrapped in an attempt to prevent excessive dripping of water from the stems. This conventional system has two main disadvantages. Firstly, the customer has the problem of water dripping from the stems, and secondly, and more importantly, unless the flowers are immersed in water again very quickly their life will be considerably diminished and their freshness and general appearance will be adversely affected.

Attempts have been made to overcome the first of these two problems by putting the wrapped flowers in a special water container which has resilient flaps through which the stems are pushed when inserting the 5 flowers into the container and which serve to "wipe" water from the stems as the flowers are withdrawn from the container. However, the efficiency of these flaps is relatively low, and, in any case, this offers no solution to the problem of the flowers being out of 10 water for perhaps a considerable length of time.

It is also known to mount flowers in a water-retaining porous block when designing floral arrangements, for example in a vase or bowl. Here however the block is used primarily as a supporting medium and 15 one which enables the designer to set the flowers in it in any desired position.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved method of packaging flowers, and an improved floral pack, whereby the aforesaid problems 20 are completely overcome and one has an attractive, easily manageable, and yet efficient means of retaining the flowers at their optimum condition for extended periods of time.

In accordance with the present invention this is 25 achieved by a method of packaging flowers which comprises mounting the flowers with their stems in a water-retaining medium, and enclosing the water-retaining medium and at least a substantial length of the flower stems in wrapping material which serves both 30 to encircle and protect the flowers and also to conserve water in the water-retaining medium.

Also in accordance with the present invention there is provided a flower pack comprising a water-retaining medium into which the stems of flowers are 35 arranged to be inserted, and wrapping means arranged

both to encircle and protect at least a substantial length of the flower stems and also to enclose the water-retaining medium to conserve water therein.

By this means one achieves a complete unitary 5 flower pack where there is no danger of water dripping from the pack and where the flower stems are maintained in permanent contact with the water contained in the water-retaining medium until the purchaser actually removes them from the pack. This solves both the 10 aforementioned problems associated with conventional methods of packaging and selling flowers.

Preferably, the wrapping means comprises a first piece of sheet-form wrapping material defining a bag for said medium and having an upstanding collar, and a 15 second piece of sheet-form wrapping material defining a frusto-conical enclosure for the stems and having its narrow end in overlapping relationship with the collar. The two pieces of wrapping material are preferably sealed one to the other in the region of the collar.

20 In a preferred embodiment of the invention, different wrapping materials are used for the encircling cone and for the enclosure of the water-retaining medium. Preferably, two different types of plastics sheet material are used, suitably overlapping to provide a 25 composite enclosure.

The water-retaining medium may consist of any suitable material, although it is preferred to use a material such as that sold under the trade mark "Oasis" 30 which can be used in block form and which in addition to its moisture-retaining properties has a certain degree of strength and rigidity.

In order that the invention may be fully understood, reference is now made to the following detailed description of the embodiment of pack in accordance with 35 the invention, and with reference to the accompanying

drawing which is a schematic view of such a pack.

Referring to the drawing, this shows a block 10 of inert, porous, rigid, crushable, water-retaining material, for example such as that sold under the trade mark "Oasis". This block 10 may be cylindrical, cuboidal, or of any other suitable shape. The stems 12 of a number of flowers are inserted into the water-retaining block 10, as indicated. The term "flowers" used herein is intended to include not only flowers but also other plant material appropriate to be treated according to the invention. The block 10 is enclosed within a sheet 14 of waterproof plastics material which is preferably flexible and can readily adapt to the shape of the block 10. The sheet 14 is in the form of a bag or pouch which encloses the block and which includes an upwardly extending collar 16 around the stems 12. At least a substantial length of the flower stems is enclosed by a second sheet 18 of plastics material, wrapped to form a frusto-conical sleeve.

The narrow end of the wrapping sleeve fits within the upstanding collar 16 and the two sheets of plastics material are suitably connected at this region. For example, the two sheets of plastics material can be firmly welded one to the other, e.g. by heat sealing, to form a permanent seal between them. Alternatively, a retaining band or clip may be placed around the outside of the collar 16 to hold the two sheets securely together, although this can damage the stems unless care is taken.

Preferably, the wrapping sleeve 18 is made of a different material from that of the sheet 14 enclosing the block 10. The material used for the wrapping sleeve 18 is preferably a relatively stiff, crisp, glossy plastics material which is not susceptible to tearing, creasing, etcetera in order to give an appearance of

quality to the pack. The plastics material used for the lower sheet 14 on the other hand need not be of such high quality and is preferably relatively soft and flexible to conform to the shape of the block within it.

5 However, it is to be noted that the use of any appropriate material is to be considered as falling within the scope of the present invention, whether the same or different materials are used for the upper and lower sheets, and whether one uses plastics material or

10 other materials for this purpose. It is also to be considered as falling within the scope of the invention to use just a single one-piece wrapping sheet instead of two separate sheets.

It is also within the scope of the present

15 invention to use a non-rigid water-retaining medium into which the flower stems dip. For example, one could simply use a ball of wet moss or the like, the enclosing sheet of wrapping material conserving the moisture within the lower end of the overall package. However,

20 for display purposes it is beneficial to use a solid material in order to assist in mounting the packs for display purposes within boxes, containers or the like. Particularly if the two sheets 14 and 18 are relatively tightly sealed at the region where they overlap, the

25 rate of loss of water from the bottom of the pack may be very low, and the flowers can withstand quite considerable periods of time within the pack without attention and without losing their freshness. This is particularly important where flowers have to be transported over considerable distances and where transportation delays can result in complete loss of a consignment if adequate steps are not taken to ensure that the flowers have permanent access to water. The present invention provides a simple yet highly efficient means of achieving the objects set out above, and in addition creating an attractive and

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marketable pack having appeal both to the florist and to the customer.

CLAIMS :

1. A method of packaging flowers which comprises mounting the flowers with their stems in a water-retaining medium, characterised by enclosing the water-retaining medium and at least a substantial length of the flower stems in wrapping material which serves both to encircle and protect the flowers and also to conserve water in the water-retaining medium.
- 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95 100 105 110 115 120 125 130 135 140 145 150 155 160 165 170 175 180 185 190 195 200 205 210 215 220 225 230 235 240 245 250 255 260 265 270 275 280 285 290 295 300 305 310 315 320 325 330 335 340 345 350 355 360 365 370 375 380 385 390 395 400 405 410 415 420 425 430 435 440 445 450 455 460 465 470 475 480 485 490 495 500 505 510 515 520 525 530 535 540 545 550 555 560 565 570 575 580 585 590 595 600 605 610 615 620 625 630 635 640 645 650 655 660 665 670 675 680 685 690 695 700 705 710 715 720 725 730 735 740 745 750 755 760 765 770 775 780 785 790 795 800 805 810 815 820 825 830 835 840 845 850 855 860 865 870 875 880 885 890 895 900 905 910 915 920 925 930 935 940 945 950 955 960 965 970 975 980 985 990 995 1000 1005 1010 1015 1020 1025 1030 1035 1040 1045 1050 1055 1060 1065 1070 1075 1080 1085 1090 1095 1100 1105 1110 1115 1120 1125 1130 1135 1140 1145 1150 1155 1160 1165 1170 1175 1180 1185 1190 1195 1200 1205 1210 1215 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sealed one to the other in the region of said collar.

7. A flower pack as claimed in claim 4, 5 or 6, characterised in that different materials are used for the portion of the wrapping means around the stems 5 on the one hand and the portion of the wrapping means around the water-retaining medium on the other hand.

8. A flower pack as claimed in claim 7, characterised in that the wrapping material around the medium is a flexible, waterproof plastics material able 10 to conform generally to the shape of the medium, and the wrapping material around the stems is a relatively stiff, crisp plastics material resistant to tearing and creasing.

9. A flower pack as claimed in any of claims 4 15 to 8, characterised in that the water-retaining medium comprises a block of inert, porous, rigid, crushable material.